



WOMEN

ANSWERS ABOUT HIV VACCINE RESEARCH



HOW IS HIV/AIDS AFFECTING WOMEN?

Women are increasingly being affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. In the United States, HIV/AIDS is the sixth leading cause of death among all women ages 25 to 34 and the fourth leading cause of death among all women ages 35 to 44. More than 81,000 women have already died of AIDS in the United States. Women now account for an estimated 27% of the estimated 40,000 new HIV/AIDS diagnoses in the United States each year. African-American women comprise 67% of new AIDS diagnoses among women, while Hispanic women account for 16%. The majority of women acquire HIV through unprotected sex with HIV-infected men. Approximately 71% of women who acquired HIV in 2003 were infected by their male sexual partners, while approximately 27% acquired the virus through injection drug use. Women are vulnerable to heterosexual transmission of HIV due to sex without the use of condoms and the high-risk behaviors of their partners.

WHAT IS A VACCINE?

A vaccine “teaches” the immune system to recognize and defend against a virus (such as HIV), bacteria or other disease-causing agent.

WHY DO WE NEED A HIV PREVENTIVE VACCINE?

- There is **NO** cure for AIDS. While the availability of anti-retroviral therapy has had a dramatic impact on decreasing AIDS-related deaths in this country, these treatment regimens are complex, costly and in many cases can cause serious side effects. In addition, the development of drug resistance is common.
- Developing safe, effective and affordable vaccines that can prevent HIV infection in uninfected people is the best hope for controlling and/or ending the AIDS epidemic.
- The long-term goal is to develop a vaccine that is 100 percent effective and protects everyone from getting infected with HIV. However, even if a vaccine only protects some people, it could still have a major impact on the rates of transmission and help in controlling the epidemic. A partially effective vaccine could decrease the number of people who get infected with HIV, further reducing the number of people who can pass the virus on to others.
- Like smallpox and polio vaccines, a HIV preventive vaccine could help save millions of lives.
- An HIV vaccine may also be beneficial for HIV-infected individuals by helping to delay the onset of AIDS or slowing disease progression. These types of vaccines are referred to as “therapeutic” vaccines. It is not known if a HIV preventive vaccine will have a therapeutic benefit in HIV-infected individuals. This would require additional clinical trials in those populations.

HIV/AIDS affects Women*

Women: Represent nearly 1 in 3 newly reported cases of HIV infection in the United States



Women of color are increasingly affected by HIV/AIDS

African-American Women:
The number of new HIV cases among African-American women is more than 3 times higher than among white women



WHITE WOMEN



AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN

Hispanic Women:
The number of new HIV cases among Hispanic women is nearly the same as those among white women



WHITE WOMEN



HISPANIC WOMEN

WHAT IS HAPPENING IN HIV PREVENTIVE VACCINE RESEARCH?

- Scientists believe that an effective HIV preventive vaccine is possible and are working to speed up the research process.
- More vaccines are being tested than ever before, and the number of HIV vaccine trial sites is expanding worldwide.
- Since 1987, the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) has enrolled over 12,000 volunteers in 79 HIV vaccine clinical trials that have tested more than 52 different vaccine candidates.
- Despite these efforts, there is currently **NO** HIV preventive vaccine available.

* Data from 41 states

HOW SAFE ARE THE VACCINES BEING TESTED IN PEOPLE?

- Preventive vaccines cannot cause HIV infection because they are made of man-made materials and do not contain HIV.
- Few side effects have been associated with experimental HIV vaccines. The most common side effects are soreness at the site of injection, a low-grade fever and body aches. These responses normally disappear quickly on their own and are similar to those seen with licensed vaccines.
- Protecting the health and privacy of the volunteers is a high priority of HIV vaccine clinical trials. Prior to entering a trial, volunteers are fully informed of the processes, the vaccines being tested and possible outcomes. Volunteers who wish to participate are then required to sign an "informed consent" form to officially agree to take part in the trial. Once enrolled, a volunteer may leave the trial at any time.
- Throughout a vaccine clinical trial, volunteers are continually counseled on how to reduce behaviors that may put them at risk for HIV infection.

HOW CAN I BE SURE THE RESEARCH IS BEING DONE RIGHT?

- Safeguards and protections are built into HIV vaccine clinical trials to ensure that they meet the highest FDA standards to protect volunteers and assure the development of safe and effective vaccines.
- Clinical trials are monitored throughout the study to guarantee the safety of the participants and to ensure that the trial can meet its objectives.
- Anyone who is interested can learn more about the NIAID clinical research process and can get involved through participation in a Community Advisory Board (CAB). CABs are located in areas where NIAID-sponsored HIV vaccine trials are occurring. Through a CAB, members can provide input into study designs and local procedures and can help to prepare and educate the community about vaccine clinical trials. Participation in a CAB helps to ensure that a trial meets the needs of the community.

THERE IS NO HIV PREVENTIVE VACCINE AVAILABLE.

More vaccines than ever before are being tested. HIV vaccines do not contain any actual HIV, and therefore, cannot cause HIV infection.

WHO IS DOING THE RESEARCH?

- Many public and private research organizations, both domestically and internationally, are working in collaboration to develop HIV preventive vaccines. These include leading universities, biotechnology companies, pharmaceutical firms and government agencies such as NIAID.
- NIAID conducts and supports research to understand, treat and ultimately prevent the diseases that threaten hundreds of millions of people worldwide. This includes a broad and diverse research and development program for HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment.



For more information about HIV vaccine research, please visit:

www.aidsinfo.nih.gov/vaccines

www.niaid.nih.gov/daids/vaccine

www.vrc.nih.gov

www.hvtm.org

Or call 1-800-448-0440 (Bilingual English/Spanish)

WHAT CAN WOMEN DO?

- Let others know you support HIV vaccine research.
- Educate others about the need for an HIV vaccine and the importance of full participation of all races/ethnicities, genders and socioeconomic backgrounds.
- Support vaccine volunteers and/or volunteer yourself.
- Get involved. Join a Community Advisory Board.



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